

ISLAND MONTESSORI HOUSE SCHOOL

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SEPTEMBER PHASING-IN SCHEDULE

We suggest that students are phased in the first two weeks of school. We have found that children need this time to settle in, particularly new students, and that everyone is less tired and not as overwhelmed as they would be with regular hours right away. A phasing-in schedule for the first two weeks of school is included herewith in the Parent Handbook. Please see your child's schedule for more information.

REGULAR HOURS

School hours, during which time children are in attendance at Island Montessori, are as follows:

A.M. Session:	9:00 a.m. (doors open at 8:55) - 11:30 a.m.
Full Day Session:	9:00 a.m. (doors open at 8:55) - 3:00 p.m.

***Extended Day Program** is available as a registered program for the school year. Extended Day is available from 7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

ARRIVAL

1. We request that your child arrive **on time** to participate in the session fully.
2. Please use the **main entrance** to the school. This will eliminate the safety hazards of open doors and help to insure the security of the children. Please be as **quiet as possible** when arriving and departing and make sure that everyone in your care **walks to and from the classrooms**.
3. **Your child must be accompanied by a responsible adult to the classroom.**
4. **Please initial the log sheet and note arrival/departure time**, located on a clipboard on the boot boxes in the arrival/departure area.
5. We are formal in our greetings which encourage grace and courtesy and give a more focused start to the day. Please say your goodbyes before your child greets the staff member in the classroom.
6. Please check the hanging pocket chart on the wall for any messages.
7. **Late Arrivals:** please call the school – **592-4411** - if your child will be arriving late.

DISMISSAL

11:30 a.m.:	AM children formally dismissed from the classroom to a responsible adult.
3:00 p.m.:	children (except those in after school care who are escorted by a staff member to the OSC classroom) formally dismissed from the classroom to a responsible adult.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO INITIAL THE LOG SHEET & note any messages.

CHILDREN'S WORK WILL BE SENT HOME ON ALTERNATING FRIDAYS.

AUTHORIZATION FOR REMOVING A CHILD FROM SCHOOL

The school will obtain in writing from the parent or guardian a list of the names of all persons authorized to take the child from the facility (Authorization Form).

UNAUTHORIZED PICK-UP

The guardian is required to notify the caregiver in writing if someone else will be picking up the child. If the person picking up the child is not known to the caregiver, information about the person will need to be provided (name, phone number, physical description). The person will be asked to show photo identification. If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up a child, the child will remain under the supervision of the caregiver. The caregiver will speak to the individual and explain the policy that no child will be released without written authorization from the guardian. If difficulties arise, all reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the safety of the child and other children. If necessary, the police will be called for assistance.

ALLEGED IMPAIRED PICK-UP

It is the caregiver's responsibility, to the extent that is possible, not to release a child to an authorized person who unable to adequately care for a child. If the caregiver believes that a child will be at risk, the caregiver will offer to call a relative or friend to pick up the person and child, or offer to call a cab to pick them up. If the person is driving a vehicle, the caregiver will explain that driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is against the law and that the caregiver is obligated to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. If the presumed impaired person chooses to get in the car with or without the child, the caregiver will immediately notify the police and provide description of the car and geographic vicinity. If the caregiver believes the child is in need of protection, the caregiver will call the Ministry for Children and Families.

CUSTODY-RELATED COURT ORDERS

If a formal custody agreement or court order exists, a copy of the order needs to be placed in the child's file. The guardian is responsible for providing accurate and up to date information concerning the legal guardianship of the child. Without a custody or court order on file, the caregiver cannot deny access to the non-enrolling parent. Should there not be a custody or court order on file, the non-enrolling parent will be required to produce current photo-identification at the time of first pick-up. The guardian will provide all consents and copies will be kept with the child's Authorization Form.

EARLY ARRIVALS AND LATE DEPARTURES

Other than the children **registered** in our Extended Day Program, we cannot accommodate children outside regular school hours, except in unavoidable emergency situations (notification required as soon as possible). Children who are not picked up on time or arrive early can be a serious concern. In addition to the stress and discomfort of the child involved, it may result in a staff member missing a lunch break or a scheduled meeting. Therefore, parents are required to make alternate arrangements, when necessary, to avoid early arrival and/or late pick-up. This policy exists as much for the well-being of the children involved as for that of the staff, and other children and families in the School.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Arrival and departure at the regular times (as noted below) are necessary for the smooth flow of the program, important so that children will not miss out on any special events, and essential for the well-being of the children and staff of Island Montessori.

Arrival:	All children - 9:00 a.m.;
Dismissal:	A.M. children - 11:30 a.m.;
	Full-day children - 3:00 p.m.

1. It is recommended that the responsible adults (parents, sitters, nannies, and others listed on the Authorization Form) arrive 5 minutes before regular dismissal times (i.e. 11:25 a.m. for the morning students and 2:55 p.m. for the all day children). This allows for a relaxed departure and a smoother flow, particularly in the afternoon when more children must go through the process of leaving for the day. It is also important to allow 5 minutes past the regular dismissal times for children to get ready and leave without distress.
2. If dismissal at exactly 11:30 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. is critical, then it will be necessary to make arrangements for early pick-up (i.e. arrive 10 to 15 minutes early, and whenever possible, inform the staff in advance).
3. If a guardian has not picked up a child or called by 15 minutes after the regular dismissal time (i.e. 11:45 a.m., 3:15 p.m. or 5:45 p.m. for After School Care), the caregiver will try to contact the family and then alternate person(s) from the authorized pick-up list. If no one is available and the parent has not contacted the caregiver by 60 minutes after the regular pick up time (12:30 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. for After School Care), the caregiver is required to notify the Ministry for Children and Families.
4. A parent or other responsible adult will be considered late picking up his/her child(ren) at five (5) minutes after the regular dismissal times (i.e. 11:35 a.m., 3:05 p.m and 5:35 p.m. for After School Care.). The departure times will be noted in the daily log when each child is picked up (time noted and initialled by the individual picking up the child).
5. **A late pick-up fine has been established at \$1.00 per minute per child when pick-up is more than five minutes beyond the regular dismissal times.** Time of pick-up will be recorded by staff on the sign-in sheet and initialled by parent or caregiver. Parents will be billed for the fines - thus, it is very important for parents to explain the system to all adults who may pick up their children.
6. If a parent or alternate caregiver has an emergency, please contact the School and make arrangements for someone else to pick up your child.
7. When there are repeated instances of late pick-up, it will be necessary to consider stronger sanctions. We sincerely hope that we will never reach this point.

LATE DROP-OFF AND EARLY PICK-UP

Whenever possible, notification of either of these is requested (please call the school – **592-4411**). It is important for parents/caregivers to make direct contact with one of the directresses upon late arrival or early departure in addition to signing the log sheet as usual.

PARENT-CHILD FAMILY VISITS POLICY

The Board and the School promote and encourage an “open door” policy by which parents are encouraged to join and interact with their children. In order to provide stability and routine for our children, we offer regularly scheduled open houses and observation days. Parents are also encouraged to participate in field trips and family events.

However, the Board does acknowledge that not all children have a single set of parents. The following policy is intended to provide staff and parents with guidelines in how to deal with children who are part of a single, separated or divorced relationship. This is being done to ensure that not only do parents have a sense of confidence that the School will do its best to respect the terms and agreements in place but also, more importantly, for the best interest of the children who may become upset and confused by unexpected changes.

The School will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. All parents not living together are required to give to the School a parenting schedule (if applicable) as well as acceptable pick-up and drop-off individuals.

2. All parents are requested to adhere to this schedule in the best interests of the children as routine and structure is extremely important for them.
3. If the non-custodial parent visits on a non-scheduled day, the School will inform the custodial parent.
4. Where possible, the School will encourage parents to visit and schedule “open house” or parent observation days on each parent’s regularly scheduled day.

It should be emphasized that the School **will not** enforce a voluntary agreement between parents, but **will** enforce a Child Custody agreement when there is a legal agreement to do so **and the documents are on file at the school.**

STAFF HOURS

Classroom staff will regularly be at school from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Extended Day Program Staff hours are obviously different). During the hours outside of the times when children are in session, the classroom staff will be involved in a variety of activities including cleaning and preparing the environment, planning the program and activities, meeting with various individuals, etc. Lunch supervisors are on duty from 11:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for staff lunch breaks.

CLASS SIZE AND AGE DIVISION

Please see our Community Care Facilities Group Day Care Licences posted in each of our classrooms.

STUDENT ADMISSION POLICY

Island Montessori House School is licensed as a group daycare for children 30 months to school age and is certified as a Group 1 Independent School for our Kindergarten/Grade One children. Available spaces are allotted in the order of priority of the applicants on the waiting list based on the order their applications were received.

Funding from the Government for our Kindergarten/Gr. 1 aged children (aged 5 years or older by Dec. 31st) allows their fees to be less than double the fees of half-days. Unfortunately this funding from the government does not apply to children who are not Canadian residents/landed immigrants, or to our full day preschool-aged children. Thus, these fees are higher than our Kindergarten/Gr. 1 fees.

TUITION POLICY

Tuition costs are an on-going method of raising revenues in order to provide a solid education for our Preschool and Kindergarten/Gr. 1 children. Tuition fees for the current year are available on our website (islandmontessori.com). There is a 10% discount off the fees of the second child when two or more siblings are enrolled in the program at the same time.

The Board recognizes the financial burden that this places on all families. The following tuition payment options are available:

- prepayment of two months’ fees followed by 8 post-dated cheques from September to April;
- preauthorized payment of two months fees followed by 8 monthly credit card* payments from September to April;
- payment in full by cheque – 2% discount;
- payment in full by credit card – no discount given (we only accept Visa and Mastercard);
- Child Care Subsidy for eligible families (parents are responsible for any difference between CCS and monthly tuition fees);
- bursaries may be available to eligible families;

- there are no refunds due to statutory holidays, vacations, illness or unavoidable school closures (e.g. due to adverse weather conditions).

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

The Board requires that you pay a deposit, equivalent to two (2) months fees, prior to the beginning of each school year for each child in the program. This amount, payable in two post-dated cheques (or by credit card) will pay for your child's May and June fees of the up-coming year at Island Montessori. Additionally the Board requires that you give 60 days notice if you wish to withdraw your child from the program and the penalty at that time shall be the monetary loss of one month's tuition. Less than sixty (60) days would result in the loss of two months' prepaid tuition fees. Registration and Handbook, and Membership fees are nonrefundable. Removal of a child from the program from March 31st onward will result in no refund. We sincerely hope that this procedure will not be necessary.

INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

You may already have heard of our school's program for children with special needs. It has an excellent reputation that we've earned over many years. Professional agencies such as the CNIB, the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children, the Ministry of Children and Families, and of course word-of-mouth, all bring us children who need extra help in the classroom. Our Montessori classroom teachers and our special student assistants are all highly trained to accommodate our diverse population. They regularly upgrade their skills and knowledge through professional development. Our special student assistants help children with extra needs be involved in the program and school community more fully than they could on their own.

The students' needs vary widely, since children develop differently from one another. Some children require one-on-one support from a special student assistant for the whole session, while others share support as they become more independent. Some children have physical needs, while others primarily need help learning to focus in a busy classroom or mastering social interactions that come more easily to other children. We also monitor our new students enrolled in our regular program and determine who among them might need more support at this point.

We pride ourselves on giving every child one-on-one support when needed. The Montessori method assumes that all children have a natural desire and ability to learn. Dr. Maria Montessori stressed that we must observe the individual needs of each child and create a program that will promote the development of the whole child. In all cases, the program must fit the child, not the child to the program. We bring this Montessori vision to all our children, who are, therefore, equals—true peers-- in our community.

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

Our Special Education Policy is available upon request from the school office.

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

Criminal record checks are mandatory for anyone working with children and are kept on file in the school office. Our Criminal Record Check Policy is available upon request from the office.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Island Montessori is committed to doing what we can and must to maintain and promote good health and safety of the children in the program. All Recommended Safety and Health Practices as required by the health department staff and those included in the Child Care Regulations will be followed (see Health & Safety Practices Handbook for more information).

Smoking in the school or on the school grounds is not permitted for health and safety reasons.

Emergency phone numbers are posted next to the telephone.

ANAPHYLAXIS POLICY

While Island Montessori cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment, the School will take reasonable steps to provide an allergen-safe and allergen-aware environment for students with life-threatening allergies. Our complete Anaphylaxis Policy is available on request from the school office.

RECORD KEEPING

Up-to-date records will be kept for each child enrolled showing:

- the child's current photograph;
- the child's name, sex, date of birth, medical insurance plan number, and immunization record;
- the date of the child's enrollment in the School;
- the child's daily attendance record;
- names and telephone numbers of a parent of the child, the child's medical practitioner, and a person to contact in case of an emergency;
- any therapeutic diets or special instructions;
- any allergies (food or others) - the information will also be posted prominently on the First Aid cabinet in each of the classrooms;
- any medication prescribed (please see below for clarification of what medications are admissible) by a medical practitioner **must be accompanied by a Medication Administration Card** (forms are available from the office) that outlines all instructions for administering that medication;
- the times for giving any special diets or medications;
- authorization for removing a child from school;
- any other instructions given by a parent;
- any illness or medical disability disclosed by a parent or medical practitioner;
- progress reports on the children will be kept on file.

SCHOOL HEALTH POLICY

Any child who has had a fever, severe cough, or has been vomiting or had diarrhea within the past 24 hours should not be at school. As all children are required to spend a portion of their day outside, if a child is too sick to participate in normal activities at the school, (s)he should not attend. In fairness to the child, other children and the staff, staff have the authority to refuse admittance to children who are ill to the point of being unable to participate in daily activities or who have a contagious disease or condition.

If a child becomes ill during the day, staff will notify the parent/guardian at home or work. The sick child will need to be picked up immediately; therefore, it is required that each family have a pre-arranged alternate person to pick the child up if necessary. Whenever a child develops new symptoms of an illness or has a worsening of symptoms, the parent/guardian will be notified to take the child home. If the parent/guardian is unavailable, the staff will call the contact person on the emergency consent form. Until the child is picked up, staff will care for the child to the best of their ability.

If a medical emergency arises, staff will immediately contact the parent/guardian. It is essential that all information on the emergency cards and forms be kept up to date, and any changes in telephone numbers, etc. must be reported and recorded at the School.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRESENTATIONS

The staff will provide presentations of health and safety procedures to the children (nutrition, traffic safety, dental care, fire drills, etc.) to instruct children and guide them in the practice of the rules of health and hygiene, and safety. The health and safety rules will be clear and simple.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION FORMS

All personal information required for handling children's emergencies will be recorded and easily available at all times. An Emergency Information Form, Emergency Consent Form and Earthquake Form will be completed for each child and filed in the appropriate spots (Emergency Info. in duotang in cupboard with the First Aid Kit; the Consent Card with the portable first aid kit; the Earthquake form in the Earthquake Kit). *Emergency Consent Cards will be taken on all field trips.*

MEDICATIONS

Any prescribed medication must be accompanied by a Medication Administration Card (available from the school office) signed by the child's physician, detailing the name of the medication and administration of the medication. The supervisor will designate one staff member to administer the medication precisely in the amount and at times specified by the child's physician. A written record must be kept of the dates and times and initials of the staff member who administers the medication. No other medication may be given to a child.

**This must be medication that is required on an on-going basis (e.g. insulin), not just a short-term medication (e.g. antibiotics). For clarification please see the Principal.

Medications will be kept in the marked First Aid cupboard in the child's classroom.

ABUSE

No child enrolled at the School will be subjected to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or to physical or emotional neglect, while under the care or supervision of the program. If a staff member has reason to suspect abuse or neglect of a child, this concern must be reported by the staff person, to the Ministry of Children and Family Services, as required by law.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

If a child has a communicable disease, the parents must inform the school staff. The staff is required to notify the Medical Health Officer or the school nurse, and whenever necessary and appropriate (based on the advice of the Medical Health Officer or nurse), a notice will be sent home informing all parents of the communicable disease.

REPORTING TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Other than in the circumstances as outlined in the policies above where we are required by law to report to outside agencies, if there are concerns about a child's development or well-being, the staff will discuss these with the parents, and offer recommendations when appropriate. This may involve outside agencies, and the staff is committed to supporting and assisting parents in order that they can get whatever help is required. The staff may consult with other professionals when necessary, maintaining confidentiality at all times. We are also committed to working with outside agencies and professionals for the benefit of the children and parents in our program.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Each child's immunization record must be presented upon enrollment and updated accordingly.

SCHOOL SAFETY POLICY

Island Montessori is committed to ensuring the safety of all children in the program through:

- active and positive supervision of the children;
- monitoring and ensuring safe space arrangement in the classroom;
- providing developmentally appropriate programming, materials and activities;
- active and on-going prevention policies.

Emergency Procedures will be followed as outlined in the pink pages posted on our bulletin board. We participate in regular fire and earthquake drills as required by the various licensing agencies for our school.

SERIOUS INJURIES OR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the case of an accident that requires extensive First Aid treatment or any medical emergency, the **staff will call 911 first and a parent/guardian will be notified immediately thereafter.** In addition to caring for the injured or ill child (one staff member may be fully occupied with this), the staff will ensure the safety and well-being of the other children in the program. The Ministry of Health Incident Report form will be completed within 24 hours of the injury/incident. Staff present at the time of injury/incident will be responsible for:

- notifying parents;
- completing and signing the form;
- filing the original at the school and submitting one copy to the licensing officer.

All staff will have current **First Aid certificates.**

All **hazardous items** will be stored securely out of children's reach at all times.

Materials are checked closely to avoid **toxic ingredients** (labels are read, etc.).

First Aid Kits, approved by the medical health officer, are in the First Aid Cupboards marked by a red cross in each of the classrooms, fully supplied as required. A portable first aid kit is taken on any excursions away from the School, and out during fire drills. Earthquake Kits also contain first aid kits.

Earthquake Kits are kept fully supplied, available for easy access. Please see the Earthquake Information Sheet for more information regarding Earthquake Procedures.

Every three months the condition of all indoor and outdoor equipment will be recorded and reported to the school administrator. Any items deemed unsafe will be removed or placed "off limits" until repairs can be made. Play areas will be inspected daily to ensure the health and safety of all the children.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips will be chosen and arranged by the staff.

Parents will be notified of special field trips and asked to sign permission slips. Occasionally, the children will be taken on impromptu field trips (e.g. nature walks) and the Impromptu Field Trip Permission Forms must be completed.

Guidelines for field trips will be followed at all times. At least one staff member will accompany each group. The appropriate emergency records for each child will be taken on the field trip as well as the required first aid supplies. A minimum of one adult for every three children will be arranged for field trips. A staff member will take responsibility for enlisting help from parents.

ANTI-BULLYING and ANTI-VIOLENCE POLICIES

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our children so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all children learn that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. All teaching and non-teaching staff, children and parents have an understanding of what bullying is.

Violent, abusive or anti-social behaviour on the part of teaching, non-teaching and administrative staff, children and parents will not be tolerated.

The above are policy statements taken from the comprehensive individual policies. **Full detailed copies of our Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Policies** are available from our school office.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Field trips offer exciting opportunities for children, but transportation is always a challenge. Safety of the children is our priority. Therefore, a transportation policy regarding transportation to and from field trips is in effect:

1. Teachers will not normally drive children because they have other responsibilities. Exceptions may occur under special circumstances.
2. **Car seats are mandatory for all children** (either a five-point car seat or a booster seat as required by law).
3. There will be a sign-up sheet for parents to volunteer to drive children for the field trip. Drivers must provide a copy of their automobile insurance confirming that they have a minimum of **two million dollars in liability coverage**. Drivers are responsible for ensuring that children are safely buckled in during the drive.
4. If there are not enough places available in volunteer vehicles to transport all the children, *in accordance with licensing requirements*, unfortunately the field trip may have to be cancelled.

We appreciate your cooperation and thank you in advance for volunteering your time and vehicles to make our field trips successful.

CLOTHING

Each child should arrive dressed in (or at least have in his/her possession) outdoor clothing appropriate for the weather. Even though our coastal climate is unpredictable at times, we still would like the children to have the opportunity for outdoor time on a daily basis. When the weather is warm, it's helpful for children to have shorts and short-sleeved shirts, as well as a sun hat in their drawstring bags. When it starts to get cool, it's important to have hats, mittens and sweaters available. Also, the play area outside is often wet and muddy, and the children need splash/mud pants and boots at school at all times.

If it is important that your child wear certain items of clothing on a given day, **PLEASE**:

1. Note this in the logbook;
2. Be consistent with this request while the child is in your (or your alternate's) care.

It is important that all children, both full and half time, have one complete change of clothes available (in their drawstring bags) at all times. These clothes must be the right size, appropriate to the season, in good repair and something the child is willing to wear! Please be sure the fasteners are of the type your child can manipulate.

The children need to have some indoor footwear that will remain at school - non-slip shoes (slip-ons or ones with velcro closures, at least until a child is able to tie his/her own laces).

***PLEASE BE SURE THAT ALL CLOTHES ARE LABELLED WITH THE CHILD'S NAME.**

NUTRITION POLICY

The school is committed to encouraging a sound nutritional program at snack and lunch times. A healthy, nutritionally balanced meal before school is extremely important. If a child is unable to eat before coming to school, then the food can be brought to school, and eaten at the snack table. When preparing your child's lunch, please do not send or give foods containing a large amount of sugar, food colouring and additives (e.g. gum,

cakes, candy, pies, cookies, soft drinks including kool aid and fruit drinks). Children, who demonstrate a high energy level, are irritable and easily distracted from their work, are often steady consumers of large (relative to body size!) amounts of sugar.

When making your child's lunch please ensure that you follow safe food handling practices and that you include an ice pack to keep foods chilled and pack warm foods in an insulated food-safe thermos. We are unable to provide space in our classroom fridge (unless medically necessary), nor do we have microwaves in the classroom and cannot warm foods up. Snack will be provided for the children with the items to be served posted on a white board in the entry way to the classrooms. As children's appetites often fluctuate, staff members will return any uneaten food to let parents know how much (and what) their child has eaten at school. This can then be consumed at home or disposed of as you see fit, but should not be returned to school.

FOOD PREPARATION AND HANDLING

The children will help prepare snacks (e.g. washing, peeling and cutting carrots). Before working with food, both children and adults will wash their hands with soap, and ensure that the work surfaces and utensils are absolutely clean. Every effort will be made to prepare, serve and store food in the safest and cleanest manner possible.

WASHING DISHES AND UTENSILS

Dishes and utensils will be washed using the method required by the Licensing Board - soapy water wash, clean water rinse, diluted bleach water soak (for at least two minutes) and then air-dried.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are recognized in a special celebration. The directresses will send out a notice close to your child's birthday with further details. Iced cakes or very sweet or messy treats are not appropriate at school.

Please distribute birthday invitations privately rather than at school. Although staff members feel very honored to be invited to birthday parties, it is the school's policy for staff to decline such invitations. There are just too many students and attending birthday parties would become an all encompassing and expensive social life! Furthermore, it may hurt children's feelings if staff members go to one child's birthday party but not to another's. Usually we will let children know that the teachers will celebrate the child's birthday at the school celebration instead.

NO NUT POLICY **IMPORTANT**

We often have children in the program who are allergic to nuts and, as such, have a policy of simply not having nuts (or nut products) in the classroom. This is unfortunate, but sensible given the severity of allergic reactions to nuts.

TOYS

Toys are expected to remain at home or in the car. Toys are not part of a Montessori classroom and are a distraction from the program. **Jewelery** is equally inappropriate and distracting in the classroom. Please ask your children to leave their jewelery at home or in the car. During the year, we will have special days when children can bring in items from home (e.g. Toy Day, Jewelery Day, Board Game Day, Stuffed Animal Day). Children are encouraged to speak with us to arrange these special days.

Books and tapes are welcome anytime, but please **remember to put your child's name clearly on any book or tape brought into the school.**

VIDEOS

Videos are shown infrequently to the children at Island Montessori, but we do believe that there are several benefits in doing this, including the following:

1. **Educational value:** we select videos related to various themes and topics that are being studied and talked about in the classroom (e.g. 'Lost in the Woods' - this not only is relevant to being lost in the woods, but also in a mall or anywhere else).
2. **Group dynamics:** the children are learning to sit together, respect others (e.g. talking out loud during a show, while it may be appropriate at home, can disturb other members of an audience), have patience, consider what they have seen in order to discuss the details following the show, etc.
3. **Entertainment value:** it is great to watch the children enjoying a show together - laughing with their friends, and so on. Especially after working particularly long and hard, or if the weather is terrible outside, a video can be fun.

Whenever we show a full-length feature, the children are given the choice of watching part or all of the film, or not watching at all and doing work in the classroom. Also, if children bring in videos, we may watch a small part just before dismissal time (e.g. *Winnie-The-Pooh and The Blustery Day*).

Videos and television shows are often looked upon as performing a babysitting service, and this certainly can be true. However, they can also be valuable tools for learning. The key is for adults to be available to talk about what the children have seen, and to share ideas, information, laughter, sadness and joy.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION POLICY

Our physical education program:

- provides opportunities for development of motor skills (body awareness, body control, locomotor skills, non-locomotor skills, balance, strength, co-ordination, manipulative skills and spatial awareness);
- develops knowledge and understanding of movement concepts, physical skills, physical fitness, and safety;
- provides opportunities for creative expression;
- encourages a positive attitude toward physical activity;
- enhances self-concept and self-confidence;
- develops positive interpersonal relationships and spirit of co-operation;
- enhances physical fitness;
- develops safety awareness.

KINDERGARTEN/GR. 1 GYMNASTICS, SKATING AND SWIMMING LESSONS

As a regular part of the gym program for the Kindergarten/Gr. 1 children, a series of 8 to 9 weekly gymnastics lessons (or other suitable group lessons) will be scheduled in the Fall, followed by a similar series of skating lessons in the Winter and swimming lessons in the Spring. When possible, this will happen at a local recreation centre, although other suitable locations may be used.

The cost of the lessons depends upon the number of instructors (approximately one adult for five children), and is divided equally with parents paying for the lessons. If anyone has difficulty with the cost of the lessons, we would certainly look at options (e.g. extended payments).

The primary children are expected to participate unless medically excused. If a child is unable to participate on any given day, he/she would still go to the lesson and watch, rather than go to school, both for the sake of the child and because there are no K/1 staff at school. At least one staff member will be present at the lessons at all times to observe and assist the children, and to sit with children who are unable to participate in the lesson.

For children with special needs, an assistant from the school or a support worker from Recreation Integration Victoria will accompany them should this be necessary.

Parent volunteers may be needed to assist in transporting the children to and from the lessons.

MUSIC

Our music program is designed to support the children's natural enjoyment of musical activities of all sorts, and to lead them to a greater understanding and appreciation of music. Through various activities, the children begin to learn about elements in music (e.g. rhythm, beat, timbre, dynamics, tempo, pitch), train their ears and voices, develop social skills as they share happy times singing and creating music together in a group, and grow in self-confidence and self-esteem.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Materials and equipment will be suitable for the age and development of the children in the school, and must be safely constructed, free from hazards, and in good repair.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Although Island Montessori House is not a parent co-operative, we can only function with the regular assistance of all parents in performing tasks not directly related to the specialized roles of our Directresses. With this in mind, we have compiled a list of some tasks and committees, including becoming a member of the Board of Directors...some of which need to be done regularly, some intermittently, and some only occasionally (see Volunteer Help List). We find this works extremely well, and we would appreciate it if each parent would complete the Volunteer Help Form, choosing both

a task and a committee where he/she might be willing to help, and/or volunteering for the Board. We will try to distribute the work load as equally as possible and will prepare a list of assigned tasks prior to the end of September each year.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

At Island Montessori, we recognize the importance and necessity of good communication, and we are committed to working on keeping the lines of communication open. **Our school phone number is 592-4411.** We would appreciate notification of children's absences, giving the reasons for the absences. If we are unable to answer the phone, please leave a message. If necessary, we will return your call as soon as possible.

Communication between parents and staff often takes place informally during the arrival and departure period. The staff understand the significance of this contact, but ask that it remains brief to ensure staff can continue with adequate supervision and interaction with the children.

*****If you have important information for staff (such as early pick-up, late arrival, child going home with another child or alternate caregiver, scheduled absences, tired or hungry child, family stresses, etc.), please give a WRITTEN NOTE to the DIRECTRESS AT THE DOOR or OSC STAFF.***

Appointments can be made to meet with staff for discussions of questions or concerns. Please call after 3:30 p.m. or e-mail to set up an appointment. The staff will make every effort to contact the parents if an issue arises concerning their child.

KEEPING INFORMATION CURRENT

It is important for parents to notify the school regarding changes of address, phone number, hours of work, child's physician, babysitter, parent vacation, new siblings, or anything else that will affect the child's relationship with the School.

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING CONCERNS/COMPLAINTS

Concerns and complaints related to children in the program should be directed to the Senior Directress of the classroom staff first, and then with Principal if not resolved. Concerns and complaints related to the business of the School should be directed to the Board of Directors.

If a parent/guardian has a concern or complaint about a staff member, a volunteer, another parent, or person at the School:

1. he/she should discuss the matter directly with the other person involved by making an appointment that is mutually agreeable. If the person(s) involved are unable to resolve the matter, or are not happy with the result, then...
2. the matter should be discussed with the Principal. If the matter still is not resolved, then...
3. the concern or complaint should be submitted in writing to the Board of Directors, and every effort will be made to work out the problem.

Each situation will be handled with respect for and adherence to confidentiality.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Safeguarding the personal information of our students, parents, employees and volunteers is a fundamental concern of Island Montessori. The school is committed to meeting or exceeding the privacy standards established by British Columbia's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and any other legislation. **Full detailed Personal Information Privacy Policies for Employees, Volunteers, Parents and Students are available from our school office.**

While some of the information about a non-profit society is considered to be public information (for further information, refer to the Society Act of B.C.), it is expected that if a Board Member and/or Staff Member of Island Montessori receives information that is private and confidential, he or she should respect confidentiality where appropriate at all times and avoid revealing this information to other people. Legal liability could be involved for Board and Staff breaking confidentiality.

Confidentiality refers to all information that must not be disclosed/shared with others - information that is classified as private and personal. In a child care program, information that may be considered confidential includes:

- information about children who are/were enrolled in the program. This excludes the responsibility the staff have regarding reporting of alleged abuse as well as information that may be legally required in a court;
- information about families of children who are/were enrolled in the program;
- personal information about the Staff including information related to criminal record checks;
- "in camera" discussion and decision making at board/committee meetings not recorded in the minutes of the organization.

Please note that we are required by law to release pertinent information regarding our children, families and staff to the Community Care Licensing Facilities and the Public Health Nurse. As a result, these agencies are not bound by our confidentiality policy.

PARENT OBSERVATIONS

A timetable for scheduling 20 minute parent observations will be posted on the boot boxes in January of each year. This will not be a time for working with your child but rather for observing the class in session. Please take into consideration that your presence will have an effect on your child's behaviour, concentration and work habits. Some parents prefer to observe at a time when their child is not in session and share observations with another parent (i.e. A watches B's child; B watches A's child).

Arrangements can be made at any time during the year for parents to observe the class in session.

IN HOUSE/OPEN HOUSE

This is an opportunity for parents to work with their child(ren) and the materials. It is least stressful for the child if just one parent attends at a time (parents may want to split the session or alternate Open Houses). In the case of two children in the program, it is helpful if both parents are able to attend at the same time.

We regret, due to space limitations and for safety reasons, we are unable to accommodate extra visitors at this time, although grandparents and siblings certainly can share some of the time with the parent(s). Visitors are welcome at other times. Please arrange visits with the classroom staff.

You may wish to spend part or all of a session with your child. If you are unable to come, please let your child and us know so that we are sure to spend extra time with your child. Arrangements can be made for an alternate visit. It is important to consider this time as an opportunity for your child to share whatever she/he chooses.

WORK

Montessori programs are process, rather than product, oriented. Expecting and being vocal about written work is counter-productive to the spontaneous development of the children and is discouraging to the staff.

Please remember that the children's work/play/growth is on many fronts and are all equally necessary for the full development of the child. Children do not grow evenly in all areas, so that if there is a lot of physical growth or a need to work on social or emotional skills, they may be less interested in academic activities or may even regress in another area.

"WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY?"

If only we could banish this question! It puts children on the spot to produce something (a project or a story), and right then they may not be able to come up with anything. No one likes to feel stupid. Often, especially at the beginning of the school year, children do not know the names of the pieces of work. Please ask one of the directresses if you want to know what your child is doing at school. It is also important to note that our program is not particularly product-oriented; we work more on processes.

RECOMMENDED READING

All parents are strongly encouraged to do some related reading to further your understanding of the Montessori Program. Without some background knowledge, certain aspects of the program might seem puzzling. It will also make your observations in the classroom more meaningful to you.

Each family is given a copy of A Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom by Aline Wolf, and we encourage parents to read this and perhaps talk about the pictures and information with their children. Other recommended books, some available for borrowing from our library:

<u>Montessori : A Modern Approach</u>	by P.P. Lillard
<u>Discovery of the Child</u>	by M. Montessori
<u>The Absorbent Mind</u>	by M. Montessori
<u>The Secret of Childhood</u>	by M. Montessori
<u>Dr.Montessori's Own Handbook</u>	by M. Montessori
<u>Teaching Montessori in the Home - The Pre-school Years</u>	by E. Hainstock
<u>Teaching Montessori in the Home - The School Years</u>	by E. Hainstock
<u>Children: The Challenge</u>	by R. Dreikurs
<u>Maria Montessori: A Biography</u>	by Rita Kramer
<u>The Essential Montessori</u>	by E. Hainstock

PARENT EDUCATION

In addition to reading the recommended books, parents are encouraged to attend all of our Parent Evenings. Some include presentations by the Directresses which directly relate to our program. At others, we have speakers who are experts in various aspects of child development and parenting skills. Parents often have similar questions and these can be effectively addressed in group situations rather than repeatedly on an individual basis. Sharing ideas and information with other parents is also an important part of these evenings.

"WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME TO HELP OUR CHILD?"

This is one of the most frequently asked questions. This awareness and support of our program at home is essential, because without follow through, our work would be of little value. Keeping in mind that our goals are encouraging independence and building self-confidence in the children:

1. Structure the environment so that children can function as fully as they are able. This would include small pitchers for pouring, sponges and basins accessible to the child for clean-up, stools to reach sinks and taps, and a myriad of other suggestions that can be gleaned from books, a series of slides that can be borrowed from our library, and exchanges with other parents.

Children are viewed as earnest explorers and workers who delight in perfecting their skills. Some days they may only want to perfect their skills for 3 minutes; other days for an hour at a time! It is extremely important to provide as many opportunities and experiences for young children as possible. One child happily doing dishes at school said, "I can't do dishes at home because my mommy says I'm too little." An attitude shift is essential for us - we need to demonstrate how to do something, ensure safety at all times, and then put aside our adult expectations and accept the child's results. The children are more interested in process than product! A perfect product (including the way they look when they are dressed!) is the adults' problem. Encourage independence in dressing (please provide clothing with fasteners children can reach and manage!), and other self-care routines, and involve your child in daily tasks (e.g. washing dishes, sorting laundry, sweeping the floor).

2. Model a healthy and accepting attitude towards mistakes, viewing them as opportunities to learn and do better the next time!
3. Count, whenever possible, by moving (and encouraging the child to move) objects. This establishes one-to-one correspondence. Rote counting, while establishing sequence, is of little value in helping a child understand quantity.
4. Watch TV with your children and discuss content, values, socially acceptable behaviour, reality and fantasy. "Action" shows do affect children and their behaviour.
5. **Turn the TV off and read for your own and your child's enjoyment (leave the "teaching to read" to them - they will teach themselves to read when they are ready!). Reading aloud for pleasure and information is important even for the older child who has learned to read.**

At Island Montessori, a lot of time is spent on oral language work such as:

directions	making up stories
prepositions	likenesses and differences
sharing events	sequence stories

The sound-symbol relationship is established through the sandpaper letters relating to objects and pictures which start with that sound. We follow this pronunciation of the alphabet:

a as in bag	n as in ran
b as in tab	o as in dot

c as in **cat**
d as in **dog**
e as in **egg**
f as in **fat**
g as in **tug**
h as in **hit**
i as in **ink**
j as in **jug**
k as in **king**
l as in **lip**
m as in **ram**

p as in **tap**
q as in **queen** (kw)
r as in **run**
s as in **sun**
t as in **let**
u as in **run**
v as in **van**
w as in **win**
x as in **fox** (ks)
y as in **yes**
z as in **zip**

Alternate sounds come later, as do puzzle words (as identified by Dolch -- the, to, that, etc.).

6. Accuracy in language on our part is essential. Correction should take the form of subtle parroting in the correct form ("I seed a fish yesterday!" - "You saw a fish yesterday!!"). It is not necessary to talk down or simplify your language. Children love learning the names of things and their vocabulary development is directly related to the language that they hear.
7. When booklets or word lists come home, please look them over with your child. If there is any question about the objective of a certain exercise, please check with one of the Directresses rather than making an assumption. Remember, children are much more process-oriented than we are and getting the right answer is not our objective.

NOTICES TO PARENTS AND NEWSLETTERS

Notices will be sent home frequently with information on a variety of subjects important to parents and caregivers (we encourage the use of e-mail). In addition, newsletters will be posted on our website two to four times a year. The newsletters are compiled by parent volunteers, and contain information on upcoming events, meetings, holidays, and other important dates. Contributions are appreciated - we welcome articles, letters to the editor, jokes, cartoons, recipes, items for sale, etc.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Various social events will be organized and held throughout the year. Parents who are interested in helping with the Mid-Winter Celebration and other social events are encouraged to sign up for the Social Committee.

PICNICS

The Pot-Luck Picnic at the beginning of the school year is held at McMinn Park in the Cordova Bay/Sunnymead area (more information will be available the first day of school). Please bring finger foods to share. For other school picnics (e.g. at year end), a notice will be sent home with further details and locations.

STUDENT SUPERVISION POLICY

Children are never left unattended.

Adults who are involved, aware and appreciative of young children's behaviours are in the best position to safeguard their well-being. To that end we:

- know each child's abilities;
- understand child development;
- establish clear and simple safety rules;
- are aware of potential hazards;
- position ourselves strategically;

- scan and circulate;
- focus on the positive rather than the negative;
- re-direct when necessary.

In an emergency, a child will be sent to fetch help rather than leaving the whole group alone. Many adults are always available in the School.

There will always be at least one qualified staff member for every eight children (according to Licensing requirements) at all times when the children are in attendance.

GUIDING YOUNG CHILDREN

Helping young children learn what is and is not acceptable behaviour involves a continuous process of guiding behaviour. Guidance is offered while acceptable behaviour is occurring, as well as before, during, and after unacceptable behaviour is displayed. The goal is to assist children in developing self-control, self-confidence, and ultimately, self-discipline, and sensitivity in their interactions with others. We consider the unique development of each individual child, have realistic expectations of children's needs and abilities, and work to establish an environment that will facilitate this and other learning processes. We also use the following strategies:

Prevention (thereby helping create a positive climate and minimizing behaviour problems):

- establishing clear, consistent, and simple limits;
- offering straightforward explanations for limits;
- stating limits in a positive way, rather than a negative way;
- focusing on the behaviour, rather than on the child;
- stating what is expected, rather than posing questions;
- allowing time for children to respond to expectations;
- reinforcing appropriate behaviour, with both words and gestures;
- ignoring minor incidents;
- encouraging children to use us as resources;
- being aware of what is happening and forestalling troubles.

Intervention (in response to unacceptable behaviour):

- gaining a child's attention in a respectful way;
- using proximity and touch;
- reminding;
- acknowledging feelings;
- distracting and diverting when appropriate;
- modelling problem-solving skills;
- offering appropriate choices;
- using natural and logical consequences;
- redirecting;
- limiting the use of equipment (when necessary);
- occasionally, for the safety or well-being of the child or others, a child may need to be removed from a situation to a quiet spot in the classroom away from the difficult situation – this is done with the support and assistance of an adult and is intended to be a positive learning experience, never a punishment. As soon as the child is ready, he or she will rejoin the group;
- providing opportunities for children to make amends.

Taken from "*Guiding Young Children*" - a booklet developed by the Prov. Childcare Facilities Licensing Board. A copy of this publication is available on-line for more information.

We ask for your support and help to develop consistent responses for children for both home and school. It is really important that the expectations and responses at school are not radically different from those at home. For example, please do not allow your children to mistreat you or siblings or peers (kicking, pulling, pinching, hitting, name calling, etc.). We do not accept this type of behaviour here at school, and will intervene if and when it happens. Also, it is important to deal with unacceptable behaviour when it happens, and to reinforce desired behaviours. Parent meetings and conferences are good times to discuss guidance with us.

Children work very hard at school and there may be times when your child needs an extra day off - for rest and relaxation. We encourage you to consider this option especially if your child is tired or particularly out-of-sorts (when it would be difficult for him/her to cope at school). Time at home must never be used as punishment and, if we ever suggest that your child might benefit from special/extra time and attention (e.g. a day off school), please understand that we have your child's best interests in mind. A child who is calm, rested and in good spirits is able to deal more effectively and appropriately with problems when they occur.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation of student progress and development is based on:

- observations of children at work and play;
- written, anecdotal notes;
- review of work done;
- informal 'testing' through play, games, etc.;
- consultation between parents and staff, and among the staff.

Reporting Procedures

Comprehensive written reports will be issued for all children in November and May. Parent/Teacher conferences will follow shortly thereafter (dates indicated in the Calendar). All parents are encouraged to sign up for a conference in the Fall. This is a good opportunity for us to meet with all parents (some of whom we might not see otherwise) and discuss any questions or concerns that you or we may have regarding your child in the program. Conferences in the Spring are optional for parents unless specifically requested by the Staff.

Permanent Record Cards will be maintained for the Kindergarten/Gr. 1 children, and these and the Kindergarten Progress Reports will be passed along automatically as required to the school that the child will be attending in the fall.

Promotions

Children will be promoted unless the staff members have serious concerns, and these will be discussed with the parents who will have the final decision to make regarding promotion or spending another year in our program.

SUGGESTIONS

We welcome suggestions and help. We are all working hard to make Island Montessori House School an inviting and stimulating place to be, and appreciate contributions. If you ever have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.